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SOME RELIGIOUS ORIGINS OF THE HEBREWS

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Origins are always an interesting study and religious origins probably more interesting than any others. The rapidly growing number of books on the history of religions is an indication of this. Scholars now are studying religions as they never did before, and the discoveries in any one field result frequently in throwing light on difficult points in others. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss some religious origins of the Hebrews: the origin of Yahwism, of the priests, and of the prophets. These have been problems since the beginning of biblical science, and now in the light of fresh archeological material and of discoveries in other religions may well bear re-examination.

The thesis of the present paper, briefly stated, is that Yahweh was originally the tribal god of Judah¹ and only gradually became the god of the other Hebrew tribes as the influence of Judah came to dominate them; that the Levites in the first instance were a tribe, who, failing in a bid for political power, attached themselves (or were attached) to the tribe of Judah and in order to share their glory became the priests and propagandists of the Judean god Yahweh;² that the prophets developed from the priesthood in protest against the professionalization of priestly functions; and that prophecy in turn went through a similar experience until it reached its culmination in the mighty work of the eighth-century prophets. The paper is dependent in part upon the thesis of an earlier paper³ and in part elaborates that. The thesis that particularly affects this paper is that Israel and Judah were in their origin two separate and distinct peoples;⁴ as separate and distinct and accordingly as hostile one toward the other as the Babylonians and Assyrians, the Serbs

¹ After the writing of this paper it was discovered that Skipwith had made this suggestion as long ago as 1899, *JQR*, XI, 247 ff.

² Cf. Burney, *Israel's Settlement in Canaan*, p. 49.

³ "A Proposed Reconstruction of Early Hebrew History," *AJTh*, XXIV, 209-16.

⁴ Judah in the earliest traditions, according to Meyer, was the brother of Israel, not his son, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme*, p. 425.

and Bulgars, or any other two peoples of kindred ancestry similarly situated. Each developed almost entirely independent of the other, Israel in the north and Judah in the south; and only gradually did circumstances bring them together, and then came the inevitable clash of interests, religious as well as political. This is well illustrated by the literatures of the two peoples. There was a stock of southern traditions and a treatment of tradition from the southern point of view, and there was likewise a specifically northern cycle of traditions. These two streams are very manifest in all the Old Testament books from Genesis to Kings, as has long been pointed out by biblical scholars, but in the light of the present thesis the fact takes on new significance. When Israel became practically extinct as a nation in 721 B.C., the two literatures tended to unite and were eventually combined to make our present narratives, with the resultant obscuring in many places of things not in accord with the later Judean point of view. Hence there were racial and political jealousies as well as religious that have tremendously affected our Old Testament narratives. Ancient writings were always written for a motive (racial, political, religious, or what not), but that motive was never the presentation of a scientifically accurate narration of events. Our sources have come through many different hands and each has invariably left its impress upon them. Stories were not fabricated, but they were manipulated. They were retold, readapted, relocalized, and mingled with others until it is well-nigh impossible to recover the historical facts lying behind them. This is particularly true of our Old Testament narratives, as Cook has so well shown,¹ and constitutes the great obstacle in the way of the solution of the problems discussed in this paper.

In the matter of the origin of Yahwism the theory that probably still prevails among scholars (although not with the vogue that it once had) is the Kenite hypothesis, first suggested in 1862 by Ghillany writing under the pseudonym of Von der Alm.² It is not the purpose of this paper to canvass all the hypotheses that have been advocated,³

¹ *Critical Notes on Old Testament History*; cf. also his article, "Simeon and Levi," *AJTh*, XIII, 370 ff.

² *Theologische Briefe an den Gebildeten der deutschen Nation*, I, 216, 480.

³ For a good discussion of the more important of these and a splendid presentation of the Kenite hypothesis see Paton, "The Origin of Yahweh-Worship in Israel," *BW*, XXVIII, 6 ff., 113 ff.

but a theory held so largely as this must receive some attention. According to the Kenite hypothesis Yahweh was originally the god of the Kenites and was entirely unknown to the Hebrews until he was introduced to them by Moses, who first learned of him through his father-in-law, a Kenite. This has the support of P (Exod. 6:2 ff.), the latest, most biased, and accordingly least trustworthy of all our sources. According to J, our oldest and probably most reliable source, Yahweh was not a new god to the Hebrews in the time of Moses, but a god long known to them (cf., e.g., Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; Exod. 3:16-18). E likewise affirms (Exod. 3:15) that the god who appeared to Moses was the same god that his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, worshiped. He seems to imply, however, that he was now revealed under a new name, for from this point onward E's preference for יהוה as against אלהים to some degree disappears. But this is just what we would expect of E, an Israelitish writer. Yahwism, as the north knew it, was a southern cult, more specifically a Judean cult,¹ and its propaganda amongst the other tribes was intimately connected with Moses. This to E marked its beginning, but E as a northerner knew probably very little about its real origin.² As a late prophetic writer and a supporter of the Yahweh cult himself he maintains that after all Yahweh was not a new god but just the old god under a new name. Thus he would commend Yahweh to his countrymen not as a southern god, but simply as a reinterpretation of their own god or god in general (אלהים).³ Indeed P's interpretation is not far different from this (Exod. 6:3, 8), nor is it altogether inconsistent with J. The defenders of the Kenite hypothesis, however, aver that the new name Yahweh means a new god. But this does not necessarily follow. With the Semites a name was a description, a definition. Without a name a thing was non-existent.⁴ A new name for God then could just as well imply

¹ See below, pp. 111 ff.

² Similarly Skipwith, *JRQ*, XI, 250: "Why is the invocation of Jahveh represented in J, Gen. iv, 26 (J²), as beginning with אלהים:—a name which must have originally signified the first man—while in E, Ex. iii, it is for the first time revealed to Moses? The answer is very simple: J expresses the point of view of Judah where the worship of Jahveh was in fact immemorial; E that of Ephraim, where tradition could recall its introduction."

³ Similarly our Old Testament documents tend to interpret the early numina of springs, trees and the like, and the Canaanitish gods of the high places as manifestations of the true god, Yahweh (cf., e.g., Gen. 13:18; 21:14 ff., 33; 28:10 ff.; 32:23 ff.; Exod. 4:24 ff.).

⁴ Cf. Babylonian Creation Story, I, 1 f.:

"When above, the heavens were not named,
Below, the earth was not called a name."

a new definition, a new significance, a new understanding of his being and power. Just so the name of Jacob was changed to Israel according to the early J narrative (Gen. 32:29).

In Exod. 18:12 (E) there is an account of a sacrificial meal in which Jethro officiated, and this is interpreted by the exponents of the Kenite hypothesis as the rite of initiation of the Hebrews into the new Yahweh cult. But this is surely a strained interpretation of the text. If anyone is being initiated into the cult of Yahweh, it is rather Jethro, who now for the first time recognizes the might of the Hebrew god (Exod. 18:9 ff.).¹ The narrative is doubtless a reminiscence of the attachment of the Kenites to the tribe of Judah (by conquest or otherwise), with the resultant adoption of the religious faith of the latter, as always happened when one tribe amalgamated with another.² Later we hear of them, or at least of one of their clans, the Rechabites (so I Chron. 2:55), as supporters of Yahwism (II Kings 10:15-28; Jer. 35:6 ff.); but there is nothing to suggest that the cult originated with them.

The Kenite hypothesis owes much of its popularity to its supposed solution of the problem of the ethical superiority of the Yahweh religion. It is said that the Hebrew adoption of Yahweh, as likewise his adoption of them, was an act of choice, as if this were "a new thing in the history of religion" and the reason for the ethical character of the Hebrew religion. But the most casual study of the history of religions will show that races since the beginning of time have been borrowing their neighbors' gods, but these acts of choice have not been fraught with any great "far-reaching consequences," as is claimed for the Hebrews.³ On the other hand, it seems quite impossible to explain how Moses could have induced his people to leave Egypt under the guidance of a god of whom they knew nothing and who had done nothing for them. He could scarcely have rallied his kinsmen in the name of a god hitherto unknown to them. It seems scarcely possible that one man could have inspired a whole people

¹ See further Gordon, *The Early Traditions of Genesis*, pp. 108 f.; Kautzsch, "Religion of Israel," *DB*, V, 626 ff. Cf. also Num. 10:29-32; Judg. 1:16, where it is said very explicitly that in response to the invitation of Moses, Jethro and his tribe united with Judah; cf. Burney, *The Book of Judges*, pp. 14 ff.

² That the Kenites became ultimately an integral part of the tribe of Judah is of course a well-known fact; see, e.g., Burney, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Sayce, "Kenites," *DB*, II, 834b.

³ Cf. also Knudson, *The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*, pp. 158 f.

with the faith in an unknown and untried god that the Hebrews manifested toward Yahweh. Under much more propitious circumstances Ikhenaton of Egypt met with the fiercest opposition from all classes when he attempted to convert his people to Aton worship. The prophets, Ezekiel and Second Isaiah, found it difficult enough to rally the people in their day to a god long known and well-tried. What Moses did, as our earliest and naturally most trustworthy source J narrates, was rather to build upon what experiences of Yahweh the people already had, just as the prophets later did, and as all reformers and leaders in like circumstances must do. He appealed to their religious memories, to their primal instinct of self-preservation, and to their nomadic love of freedom. A common religion is a first and necessary prerequisite to tribal union and united action. If the people had not been already united in this, he could scarcely have rallied them for another venture. The term "Hebrew" cannot be confined to the little group of people that Moses led out of Egypt, who were probably a fragment only of the southern tribe of Judah, whose tribal god we believe was Yahweh.¹ The Hebrews were a "mixed multitude" and each tribe had doubtless its own tribal god. The new thing that came with Moses was the united allegiance of so great a group of tribes to Yahweh as their confederate god. This was "the covenant with Yahweh."² There is a decided tendency now among scholars to believe that this took place at Kadesh rather than at Sinai-Horeb, as was traditionally understood.³ In the Old Testament there are very clearly two cycles of traditions concerning the entry into Palestine. According to one the entry was from the south and is associated with Judah, Simeon, Caleb, and other related tribes. According to the other it was from the east, and in this Joshua is the leading figure. The first is manifestly Judean and the other Israelitish. Similarly there are two traditions concerning the place of the making of the covenant with Yahweh. One connects it with Kadesh and the other with Sinai-Horeb. With the former the southern tribes are associated quite to the exclusion of the northerners. Joseph is conspicuously absent, as is likewise the Israelitish

¹ Cf. *AJTh*, XXIV, 214 f.

² *Ibid.*, 210.

³ See, e.g., Cook, "Meribath-Kadesh," *JQR*, XVIII, 739 ff.; and the authorities cited by him, *JQR*, XIX, 363, notes 1 and 2.

leader Joshua. On the other hand Sinai-Horeb belongs to the northern tribes who entered Palestine from the east. This is usually interpreted as indicating that the Leah tribes made Kadesh their rendezvous before invading Palestine from the south, and Sinai was the starting point of the Rachel tribes in their invasion from the east,¹ i.e., there were two similar episodes for the two groups of people which in itself is suspicious. Is it not more natural and more in accord with the interpretation of duplicate narratives elsewhere to see in these two narratives two versions of the same episode, a southern and a northern version, one localized at Kadesh and the other at Sinai? These the later compilers of tradition strove rather unsuccessfully to harmonize and the result is much confusion between the two places and many inconsistencies. It is just possible that the original J narrative did not have Sinai at all, for in the present narrative it plays a very minor and unimportant rôle as compared with Kadesh.² In any case J locates Sinai in the immediate neighborhood of Kadesh, whereas E makes Horeb a mount in Midian, east of the Gulf of Akaba, and hence far away from Kadesh.³ Indeed all the northern writers do this. For instance, the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5) locates the seat of Yahweh (i.e., Sinai, according to the gloss of vs. 5) in Seir and the field of Edom (vs. 4), and the Israelitish tale relating the life of Elijah makes him travel forty days from Beersheba to Horeb (I Kings 19:3, 8).⁴ The opening quatrain of the Blessing of Moses (Deut. 33) looks like an effort to combine these differing traditions.⁵ Furthermore, it is to be noted that Joshua, the Israelitish hero, is associated with Moses at Horeb in the E narrative (Exod. 24:12 ff.), whereas he is absent from the parallel account in J. Hence it would appear that the earliest and most authentic story localized the covenant with Yahweh at Kadesh; later a prominent mount in the neighborhood (Sinai) was added as an

¹ See, e.g., Paton, *JBL*, XXXII, 24; Barton, *The Religion of Israel*, pp. 47 ff.

² Sinai appears in J only in Exod. 19 and 34 and much of these chapters that is assigned to J is confessedly secondary. Cf. further on Sinai in J, Kuenen, *Hexateuch*, pp. 150 ff.

³ See McNeile, *The Book of Exodus*, pp. cii ff.

⁴ Cf. the statement of Deuteronomy, who drew largely from E, that it was a journey of eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh (Deut. 1:2); cf. also Hab. 3:3.

⁵ Cf. H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History*, pp. 62 ff.

embellishment to the episode;¹ and later still the northern Israelitish version located the whole episode at Horeb in a region far to the east and unconnected with the ancient Judean sanctuary, Kadesh.² If this interpretation be correct, the whole ingenious hypothesis of the Kenite origin of Yahweh must go by the board, and we must look for his origin elsewhere.

The earliest form of religion with any people was probably naturism, which in course of time passed over into animism. Naturism is probably not to be found to any great extent in the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 28:22; 33:20; 35:7; Exod. 17:15; Judg. 6:24), but traces of animism are unquestionably present.³ Yahweh undoubtedly had an animistic origin, but when he appears on the pages of Old Testament history he seems to be a tribal god. He was assuredly not the universally known god that Assyriologists were at one time wont to contend. Daiches⁴ and Luckenbill⁵ have conclusively shown that Yahweh is not found in cuneiform literature until the eighth century B.C. At best he was probably known little more than by name to most of the Habiri tribes as the tribal god of one of their number. In confirmation of this we note the practical absence of Yahweh names outside of Judah and Levi before the time of David,⁶ and the fact that the first intimation of Yahweh's being known outside of Palestine is with the Arameans of Hamath and Ya'udi, the names of whose kings, Ya'u-bidi and Azri-Ya'u, would suggest a knowledge of Yahweh. That he was not a prominent god with them is shown by his absence in the list of gods of Ya'udi given in the Hadad inscription.⁷

Our contention is that Yahweh was the god of some southern tribe, probably the tribe of Judah. That he was of southern origin

¹ This addition might have come with the conversion of worshipers of the moon-god Sin to the Yahweh cult, who could very well have been the Jerahmeelites. For their connection with the moon cult and with Yahwism cf. Burney, *Judges*, p. 252.

² If Horeb is identical with Sinai, as Dillmann and many others maintain, the Israelitish story will simply be another version of the Sinai story.

³ See, e.g., Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*; H. P. Smith, *The Religion of Israel*, chap. ii; Peters, *The Religion of the Hebrews*, chap. iii.

⁴ *ZA*, XXII, 125 f.

⁵ *AJTh*, XXII, 47 ff.

⁶ See Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names*, pp. 257 ff.; and J. M. Powis Smith, *AJSL*, XXXV, 15.

⁷ Cf. Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 247 ff.

is unquestioned, and his cult was nomadic in character.¹ Furthermore, he is intimately connected with Kadesh and that immediate neighborhood, all of which suggests that he was the tribal god of Judah, and this is borne out by all our evidences.

There is good reason to believe that the Hebrew tribes before they amalgamated to make the confederacies of Israel and Judah had each its own tribal god. Ever since the time of Robertson Smith this has been very generally accepted, although there has naturally been much difference of opinion as to the identity of the several gods. Some of the tribal names may suggest animal or even totem gods, e.g., Leah (wild cow), Rachel (ewe), Caleb (dog), and less clearly Reuben and Simeon.² The god of Ephraim was evidently the bull god.³ The names, Jacob-el and Joseph-el, in certain Egyptian and Babylonian inscriptions⁴ suggest that Jacob and Joseph were originally god names; and the same is probably true of Isra-el, Ishma-el, Jerahme-el, and Jabne-el.⁵ Other names are very clearly god names, e.g., Edom, Dan, Gad, and Asher.⁶ That a tribe should bear the name of its eponymous god is not at all unusual but has many parallels in the Semitic world.⁷ Zebulun and Jeshurun suggest that Zebul and Jeshur were in the first instance appellations of deities rather than mere names of tribes.⁸ If we follow Kerber's suggestion that $\text{מִנִּי} = \text{בְּנֵי־מִנִּי}$,⁹ Meni (cf. Isa. 65:11) would be the tribal god of Benjamin.¹⁰ Issachar is undoubtedly derived from

¹ See, e.g., J. M. Powis Smith, "Southern Influences on Hebrew Prophecy," *AJSL*, XXXV, 12 ff.; Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 85, 98, 131 ff., 163 ff.

² See, e.g., W. R. Smith, "Animal Worship and Animal Names among the Ancient Arabs and in the Old Testament," *JPh*, IX, 75 ff.; *Kinship and Marriage*², p. 254. For other derivations of Reuben and Simeon see Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 386, note; Skipwith, *JQR*, XI, 241 ff.

³ See pp. 119 f. below.

⁴ Cf., e.g., Barton, *Archeology and the Bible*, pp. 299 f.; J. M. Powis Smith, *AJSL*, XXXII, 83.

⁵ Cf. Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 251 f., 293 ff.

⁶ See, e.g., H. P. Smith, "Theophorous Proper Names in the Old Testament," *AJSL*, XXIV, 34 ff.; Wood, "The Religion of Canaan," *JBL*, XXXV, 254 ff.; Barton, *The Religion of Israel*, pp. 53 f.; Burney, *Israel's Settlement*, pp. 55 f.

⁷ See, e.g., Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, III, 4 f.; Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 297 f.

⁸ Cf. Skipwith, *JQR*, XI, 242.

⁹ *Hebräische Eigennamen*, pp. 67 ff.

¹⁰ Skipwith, *JQR*, XI, 247, would connect Ben-oni, the earlier name of Benjamin (Gen. 35:18), with the goddess Anath. For Anath as a possible consort of Yahweh see J. M. Powis Smith, "Jewish Religion in the Fifth Century B.C.," *AJSL*, XXXIII, 322 ff.

אִישׁ שָׁכָר, and *Sakar* is probably a god name.¹ The names Naphtali, Manasseh, and Machir probably do not suggest tribal gods, but of course it is not to be expected that all the tribal names (some of them late in origin) would preserve the god name.

Whether all the interpretations suggested above be accepted or not, it would seem very clear that many of the Hebrew tribes had tribal gods and the presumption is that all of them had, including the two tribes, Levi and Judah, that particularly concern this paper. There seems to be good evidence that the serpent god, Nahash or Nehushtan,² was the tribal god of Levi. This was suggested first by Skipwith,³ and later by Luther and Meyer,⁴ apparently independently of Skipwith, because they make no reference to him. The argument in each case is essentially the same. The setting up of the serpent in the wilderness as a god of healing (cf. Asklepios) is ascribed to the Levite Moses (Num. 21:5-9 E, II Kings 18:4), and the pole (נֹסֶה) on which he set up the serpent (Num. 21:9) is probably identical with the נֹסֶה which appears in the name of the altar, יְהוֹוָה נֹסֶה, erected by Moses in celebration of the victory won over the Amalekites through the use of the magic wand (בִּטְוֶה) of Yahweh (Exod. 17:8-16 E). It was this wand which when cast on the ground turned into a serpent (Exod. 4:2 ff. J) and with which according to E (Exod. 4:17) Moses was to work wonders (אֲוִרוֹת), and did so, in Egypt (Exod. 7:15, 17, 20), at the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14:16), in making water come forth from the rock (Exod. 17:5 f., cf. Num. 20:7 ff.), and against the Amalekites (Exod. 17:9). In Exod. 15:25 (J) it was a tree or stick (עֵץ) with which he made the water sweet at Marah, but this is simply another form of the magic rod. In P it is noteworthy that the rod is no longer Moses' but Aaron's (Exod. 7:9, and elsewhere), and this would further confirm its Levitical origin, for Aaron in the later period was "the Levite" κατ' ἐξοχήν (Num. 16-18). A further connection between Levi and the serpent cult is to be found in the probable connection between Levi

¹ Such a god name, *dSakar*, appears in the Babylonian pantheon; see Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum*, 2832. See also Ball, *The Book of Genesis*, p. 84, who compares *Sakar* with an Egyptian deity, *Sokar*.

² Cf. a similar god name in the Babylonian pantheon, *dNahish*, Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum*, 2256.

³ "The Name of Levi," *JQR*, XI, 264 f.

⁴ *Israeliten*, pp. 116 (Luther), 426 f. (Meyer).

and Leviathan,¹ both being derived from לָרָה, Arabic *lawā*, "to twist, coil." Finally, the presence of serpent names among the Levites would point in the same direction, although these, it must be confessed, are few in number, due doubtless to the fact that serpent names, like animal names in general, came to be suppressed as out of accord with later religious ideas. The father-in-law of Moses is given the name Hobab, "serpent," by J (Num. 10:29). Even P preserves the name of Aaron's brother-in-law as Nahshon (Exod. 6:23), and with the Chronicler we have Naas as the name of a Levite (I Chron. 26:4 LXXB), and Shuppim, "serpents" (I Chron. 26:16).

None of the tribal names that we have so far considered suggests any connection with Yahwism. All the evidences would indicate that we must look to the south for the origin of this cult, and in view of the fact that Yahwism came to dominate the southern tribes, and eventually to some degree at least the northern tribes as well, we must look to that tribe which came to dominate the south and eventually extended its influence into the north. This is of course the tribe of Judah, and when the name יהודה itself suggests connection with the god Yahweh, the connection between Yahweh and Judah would seem to be established beyond all cavil. Of the two explanations of the name יהודה offered by the Old Testament, Gen. 49:8 and 29:35, the latter is preferable. This clearly indicates a compound of יהו (Yahu) and some form of the verb ידה.² If Meyer is right in believing that Ya'udi was founded by a migratory group of Judeans from the south,³ this would be another indication that Yahweh was a Judean god, for Yahweh was a god of Ya'udi, at least in the eighth century B.C., as is evidenced by the name of its king, Azri-Ya'u. Only here and in the neighboring state of Hamath have we evidence for the knowledge of Yahweh outside of Palestine before the eighth century, and that must have come through Judean colonization. Another indication of the

¹ Skipwith, *JQR*, XI, 264, contrasts לָרָה, לָרִי, לָרִיָּה, לָרִיָּתָן and נָחֵשׁ, נָחֵשֶׁת, נָחֵשֶׁתָן. Cf. also Meyer, *Israeliten*, p. 426.

² So Jastrow, *JBL*, XII, 69; and Skipwith, *JQR*, XI, 247 f., as against the majority of scholars who find in יהודה simply some form of a verb "to praise," if they venture any etymology at all.

³ *Israeliten*, p. 441; cf. Peters, *Religion of the Hebrews*, p. 91, n. 2, who suggests that the Ya'udi were a remnant left in the wake of the Aramean migration that brought the Hebrews to Palestine.

connection between Yahwism and Judah is to be found in the ark of Yahweh, which was doubtless an original part of the cult. There seems to be good reason to believe that this was in the first instance exclusively Judean.¹ Only gradually did it make its way to the north in the course of Yahwistic propaganda, and even as late as the time of David it was a strange and unwelcome object to many northerners. Only so can we explain Michal's contemptuous attitude toward it in II Sam. 6:16 ff. As Cook well says, it could not have been the form of the cult but its sacred object, the ark, that aroused her displeasure.²

Our evidences, then, would seem to lead us to the conclusion that Yahweh was in the first instance the tribal god of Judah, but his priests we know were not Judeans but Levites, and this raises the problem of the relation of the Levites to Judah and the Yahweh cult. The Levites, as we know them in the time of the Judges and early Monarchy, were intimately associated with Yahwism and were amongst its vigorous propagandists. Some knowledge of their origin ought therefore to throw further light on the beginnings of the cult, and to this problem we now address ourselves.

The origin of priesthood is manifestly to be traced to the earliest stage of social evolution, and is doubtless to be found very close to the beginning of magical and religious practices. There probably was a time when each individual invoked the god for himself without the help of a mediator, but the idea early developed that certain individuals could get better, easier and more intimate access to the spirit-world than others. These were the first priests in religion. They were shamans, wonder-workers, men credited with the possession of *mana* or spiritual power; or they could be individuals who lived near sacred places and so were supposedly on more intimate terms with the spirits residing there. With the elaboration of magical practices and ritual observances the necessity

¹ See Cook, *JQR*, XVIII, 356.

² The argument based on the ark is not affected by Arnold's thesis that it "was not a unique but a manifold object attaching to every Palestinian sanctuary that possessed a consecrated priesthood" (*Ephod and Ark*, pp. 26 ff.). This does not preclude the theory that there was an original Yahweh ark that became the model or prototype of the others. If we accept Arnold's contention that the local arks were medicine boxes, or primitive sacred chests, containing the divining stones, the introduction of the ark may go back ultimately to the Levites, who, as indicated below, may have been medicine men at an early time.

arose for specialists in these matters, and thus a professional priesthood came into being. Religion became too complicated for the ordinary individual and recourse was had to the more experienced practitioners. These were rather naturally the older men since they were supposedly possessed of most experience. As the family looked to the father for the conduct of their worship, so the larger group looked to their patriarchs or elders for religious guidance, and particularly to the leader of the patriarchs. There is the tendency always to centralize authority in one individual and exalt him to a position of pre-eminence over all others. It would seem that the first form of political organization with ancient peoples was the tribe and with most this presently became a city-state as the tribe settled on the land. This particular type of organization may have been the result of the religious development indicated above, for religion was unquestionably the strongest tie and greatest force in primitive society. In any case the sheikh of the tribe and later the king of the city-state was the chief priest of the religion and almost its sole functionary. As the state grew larger, however, or became more complex in its character and organization, as it naturally must in the course of time, the duties of the king became so many and varied that he had perforce to delegate some of his duties to deputies to act in his stead. Some of his religious functions he had accordingly to commit to others, and thus we have the beginning of a professional state priesthood, which inevitably comes almost immediately into conflict with the popular priesthoods, the survivals of the earlier shamans. These latter tend to disappear in the face of the greater authority of the state priesthood, but may survive for a long time, if not to the very end, or they may be absorbed into the state priesthood.

As far as the matter can be put in brief and general terms, this seems to have been the way in which the priesthood with most peoples anciently developed. And yet there are some very manifest exceptions, as for instance the Magi of the Iranians, the Druids of the Celts, and possibly the Brahmins of India. These seem to have been clan or tribal in their origin, and in the case of the Magi, at least, it would seem that these were a tribe who, defeated in an effort to obtain political power, eventually made up in religious

prestige what they failed to attain politically. May this not be suggestive of the origin of the Levitical priesthood with the Hebrews?

That the Levites were originally a tribe is the unequivocal testimony of the Old Testament narratives. A tendency among scholars is to suppose that they were from the beginning not a tribe but a priestly caste and that the term "Levite" denotes not tribal connection but profession.¹ But is this in accord with the evidences in the case? Our earliest source of information is probably Gen. 49:5-7, dated by all scholars no later than the early Monarchy and by Skinner² early in the period of the Judges. According to this Levi is not only a tribe, but a purely secular tribe. Even in the much later poem, Deut. 33:8-11, he still figures as a tribe although now intrusted with priestly functions. In the early Old Testament narratives many individuals not of the tribe of Levi are recorded as bearing the title priest or as performing priestly functions (see, e.g., Judg. 17:5; 6:26 f.; 13:19; I Sam. 7:1; II Sam. 6:3 f.; 8:18; 20:26; I Kings 4:5; 18:30 ff.), but these are nowhere called Levites, as would be the case if the term denoted official rather than tribal status. All the Pentateuchal sources, J, E, D, and P, are quite unanimous in their testimony that the term in the first instance was tribal (cf., e.g., Gen. 29:34 J; Gen. 34 J+E; Exod. 2:1 E; Deut. 10:8; 18:1 ff.; Gen. 35:23 P), and there would seem to be no good reason to doubt their testimony.

Furthermore, our sources all agree that the once secular tribe of Levi came in time to be invested with priestly functions. As to how that came about the traditions vary and it is a problem veiled in deepest mystery, but it has its parallel in the Magi. Here was a tribe that made a temporarily successful bid for political power under Gaumata, but defeated in that effort resorted to religious interests to recoup its fortune and eventually monopolized the priestly functions to the exclusion of the earlier *athravan* and *zaotar*, who were limited to no particular class.³ Along similar

¹ The stock reference in support of this is Exod. 4:14, where Aaron in contradistinction from Moses is called "the Levite," i.e., priest, but this verse is universally regarded as late. The whole verse or at any rate the expression "the Levite" comes from a period when the Aaronites were winning the ascendancy in the priestly profession and Aaron was the Levite *κατ' ἔοχον*.

² *Genesis*, pp. 510 f.

³ See Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, Lectures VI and VII.

lines the Levites seem to have developed. That they made an early bid for political power would seem to be the natural inference from Gen. 34 and Gen. 49. That the incident was exactly as recorded in Gen. 34 is very doubtful. Both Levi and Simeon, who is connected with him in the incident, were southern tribes and it is surprising to find them so far north as Shechem.¹ Moreover, the Shechemites manifestly did not suffer the destruction depicted in the story because they continued to flourish down to the time of Abimelech, as we know from Judg. 9. It would seem better with Meyer² to suppose that the story originated near the Simeonite territory in the south, probably Kadesh, and was transferred to Shechem because of certain points of affinity with the Abimelech episode. We have already noted the tendency to transfer traditions from one place to another. It is the sort of thing that has gone on in the world since the time when traditions were first formed. That Simeon and Levi are classed together in the narratives is doubtless due to common traditions, to common southern origin, and possibly also to an apparently old tradition that they were the *only* sons of Leah.³

If the story in Gen. 34, then, has any historical foundation, it would seem to indicate that Simeon and Levi together made some drastic attempt at political power, probably in some conspiracy against the growing dominance of Judah in the southern confederacy.⁴ Defeated in that project, the two tribes were rather severely handled and all but wiped out of existence. What remained of them came in

¹ It is just possible, however, that we have here a record of an early attack of two southern tribes on the northerners, the first of a long series of conflicts between north and south.

² *Israeliten*, pp. 422 ff.

³ Cf. Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 286, 426 f.

⁴ Hence the rather mild censure of Gen. 34:30 and the reason for the later comparative insignificance of these tribes politically. In Gen. 49:5-7 this censure has been magnified into a curse, a reflection probably of the spirit of antipathy against the rising power of the Levites. It was in this period, viz., that of the Judges and early Monarchy, as noted below, that the Levites were struggling for religious ascendancy against rival priesthoods, especially in the north. Another reason for the curse may be that the lines come from a northern poet who is voicing the old-time antipathy of the north against the south. Later writers, more favorably inclined toward the Levites, extol Simeon and Levi for their act of destruction (see, e.g., Judith 9:2; Jubilees 30:4,18; Testament of Levi 5:2 ff.; cf. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees*, p. 179; *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, p. 22). In Deut. 33:8-11, written probably in the reign of Jeroboam II when the Levites had all but won religious ascendancy in both north and south, Levi is very naturally blessed and his enemies (rival priesthoods) cursed.

course of time to be absorbed by Judah, their probable conqueror. That Judah was a mixed tribe which drew by conquest or other means many elements to itself is a well-established fact.¹ Simeon we know was one of these elements,² and Levi was manifestly another. Like Simeon, Levi is unquestionably of southern origin. This is shown unmistakably by the connection with Massah and Meribah (Deut. 33:8), and by many other references in the Old Testament, e.g., Exod. 32:26-29; Judg. 17:7; 19:1. The traditions and genealogies of the Levites associate them with the south and their names are connected with sites in the south and with names found elsewhere among southern groups.³ As a southern tribe, then, Levi was closely contiguous to Judah and the evidences would further indicate that in time it was conquered by, or became attached to, the stronger tribe of Judah, even as happened with Simeon. This may be suggested by the name לֵוִי, which in accordance with the Hebrew etymology of Gen. 29:34 is popularly regarded as derived from לָוָה, "to be joined."⁴ This is indicated, too, by the names of certain Levite families which suggest Judean connection, e.g., Libni (Exod. 6:17), Hebron (Exod. 6:18), and Korah (Exod. 6:21), which was originally a clan of Judah.⁵ Similarly, the plain interpretation of the genuinely old story, Judg. 17 f., attached to the book of Judges, is that the Levite there was, as the text clearly states, "a young man from Bethlehem of Judah of the clan of Judah" and was a sojourner (גֵּר) in Ephraim,⁶ i.e., a stranger enjoying certain rights of hospitality and protection while living with an alien tribe (Judg. 17:7, 9; cf. also Judg. 19:1). To interpret "Levite" here as meaning profession and not tribe, as is frequently done,⁷ is to violate the plain meaning of the text and is out of accord with references

¹ Cf., e.g., Burney, *Judges*, p. 45.

² Cf. Burney, *op. cit.*, p. 4; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, p. 395.

³ Cf. Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 83, 120; Cook, *Critical Notes on Old Testament History*, pp. 84 ff.; *JQR*, XIX, 169 ff.

⁴ The usual interpretation of לֵוִי is that it signifies attachment, not to Judah, but to the Yahweh cult, cf. Exod. 32:26-29 (see, e.g., Barton, *Religion of Israel*, pp. 159 ff.). This is of course possible.

⁵ See Wellhausen, *Isr. und Jud. Geschichte*, p. 151, note.

⁶ If we amend the text of Judg. 17:7, וְהָיָא בְּרֶגְשָׁם to וְהָיָא בְּרֶגְשָׁם with Bewer, *AJSL*, XXIX, 273 (cf. Burney, *Judges*, pp. 422, xx), he was not a sojourner in Judah, but apparently a native there.

⁷ E.g., by Moore, *Judges*, p. 383.

to Levi elsewhere. Just as Caleb came to be regarded as belonging to the tribe of Judah although in origin distinct from it,¹ so it was with Levi.

The tribe of Simeon so completely merged with Judah that in time it disappeared altogether, but this was not the case with the Levites. They saved themselves from complete absorption and ultimate extinction as a tribe by championing the cause of the stronger tribe, particularly their Yahweh cult. Here was an opportunity of ingratiating themselves with the Judeans, and to the Judeans in this religious capacity they were not altogether unacceptable. As we have already noted, the tribal god of the Levites was probably the serpent god, and with the serpent has always been associated a certain occult, mantic power.² Hence Meyer is doubtless right when he speaks of the early Levitical priests as medicine men.³ Among the surrounding tribes they were probably known as shamans, and now in a time of need that fame stood them in good stead. It is a peculiar fact that among many ancient peoples the religious functionaries of neighboring tribes are held in greater awe than their own. Indeed it seems to have been a universal belief among ancients that the secret powers of strangers were greater than those of well-known persons. In some regions whole tribes have been regarded as powerful wizards and their services have been sought by neighboring tribes.⁴ It was probably in some such way as this that the Levites from being a purely secular tribe became the priestly order of another tribe and so saved themselves from extinction.⁵ Among the ancient Arabs the priesthood was largely in the possession of special families that did not belong to the tribe among whom they exercised their office.⁶ Indeed there is strong probability

¹ Cf. Burney, *Judges*, p. 12.

² Note in Hebrew נָחָשׁ "serpent," קִנָּח "divination."

³ *Israeliten*, p. 427.

⁴ See Tylor, *Primitive Culture*³, I, 122 ff.

⁵ Similarly, the Druids, "the very knowing or wise ones," attained their priestly position with the Celts through their supposed possession of unusual magic knowledge (cf. MacCulloch, *The Religion of the Ancient Celts*, p. 293). Numerous other examples might be cited.

⁶ See Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen Heidentums*², pp. 130 ff. Similarly, Moulton maintains that the Magi who became the priestly order of the Persians were a non-Aryan tribe (*Early Zoroastrianism*, Lectures VI and VII), and according to a growing school of writers the Druids, the most venerated priests of the Celts, were pre-Celtic in origin (cf. MacCulloch, *op. cit.*, pp. 294 f.).

that some of these were Levites who migrating southward into Arabia became priests to the Arabs, as their brethren whom they left behind in Judah became priests to the Judeans.¹ This would seem to be the best way to account for the term *lawi'u* as the word for priest in the Minean inscriptions from El-^cOlâ.² Likewise, there may be some connection between "לוי" and Arabic *weli*, as Margoliouth has suggested.³ So largely did the Levites take to the priestly profession and so completely did they in the end monopolize it that the term Levite came to be identical with priest in all the countries in which they settled.⁴

In losing their political existence the Levites rather naturally gave up most of their religion, as is shown by the fact that in El-^cOlâ they were priests of the god Wadd, the chief god of that district, whereas in Judah they were priests of the Judean god Yahweh. And yet there are evidences that they did not leave their own religion completely behind, but rather grafted some of it on to the Yahweh cult.⁵ It is only so that we can account for the fact that the serpent cult was so closely knit with the Yahweh cult and continued right down to the time of Hezekiah to be an integral part of it and was only eradicated under the influence of the vigorous polemic of the prophets against idolatry (II Kings 18:4). The presence of "serpent" as an element in Hebrew proper names⁶ is another indication of the influence of the serpent cult on the Hebrew religion, as are likewise the name of the altar erected by Moses, Yahweh-nissi, "Yahweh is my rod" (Exod. 17:15; cf. the "rod" of Exod. 4:2 ff.), and the ascription to Yahweh of the art of healing

¹ Similarly, Gray, *ET*, XXV, 257, and Spooner, "The Zoroastrian Period of Indian History," *JRAS*, 1915, pp. 63 ff., 405 ff., believe that there are evidences that not all the Magi remained in Persia but that some of them migrated early to India.

² See Müller, *Epigraphische Denkmäler aus Arabien*, p. 42; cf. Mordtmann, *Beiträge zur minäischen Epigraphik*, p. 43; Hommel, *Ancient Hebrew Traditions*, p. 278; Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 88 f., 428.

³ Quoted by Burney, *Judges*, p. 437, note.

⁴ So *magus* in Persia replaced the older *athravan* and *zaotar* as the term for priest; Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 194.

⁵ Similarly, Moulton maintains that Ahura Mazda was not primarily the god of the Magi but in becoming priests to the Persians they adopted the Zoroastrian faith, but succeeded in grafting on it certain peculiar beliefs and customs of their own (*Early Zoroastrianism*, Lectures VI and VII). It always happens that when two peoples unite the religion of the united people partakes something of the character of the earlier religion of each.

⁶ For a list of these see Wood, *JBL*, XXXV, 242, note 20.

(Exod. 15:26; 23:25). The "serpent" (שֶׁרֶפִּי) of Num. 21:8 appears again in the "seraphim" (שֶׁרָפִיִּים) of Isa. 6:2, 6 (cf. also Isa. 14:29; 30:6; Deut. 8:15); and still another evidence of the serpent cult may be found in the "serpent's stone" of I Kings 1:9, 38, and in the "dragon's spring" of Neh. 2:13.¹

That there were priests before the Levites is unquestioned. The statement that Rachel "went to enquire of Yahweh" (Gen. 25: 22 f. J) suggests an oracle and its interpreter, like the Arab *kāhin*,² likewise Exod. 33:7 ff. (E). Similarly, Exod. 22:8 ff. (E) suggests an oracle or a priest at a sanctuary to interpret the will of the god; as do also "the terebinth of the oracle-giver" (Gen. 12:6 J) and "the terebinth of the soothsayers" (Judg. 9:37). It is very evident, then, that there were priests, and probably priesthoods as well, long before the Levites entered the profession, and it was a long-drawn-out and bitterly contested struggle among the rival priesthoods before the Levites finally attained the priestly monopoly, for there is plenty of evidence that there were priests who were not Levites down to a time not long antedating the Deuteronomic Code,³ and between these and the Levites there was the fiercest kind of rivalry.⁴ So far as we know, they obtained a religious ascendancy in the south rather early. This is to be expected because the south was dominated by the powerful tribe of Judah whose protégés they were. As the Magi became the propagandists of the Zoroastrian faith although probably not originally professing it, so the Levites became the sponsors and missionaries of the Judean faith, the Yahweh cult, not only in the south but in the north as well. Here for political as well as religious reasons they naturally met with opposition. And yet even in the early period they were not unwelcome, at least in some quarters, probably because of their fame as priests and the ancient belief, already noted, that the occult

¹ Cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*², p. 172.

² Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste*², pp. 134 ff.

³ See, e.g., Baudissin, *DB*, IV, 70 ff. Some indeed seem to have been admitted to the Levitical order who were not of the tribe of Levi, as, for instance, Samuel (I Sam. 1:24 ff.). Similarly, the Brahmins up to the sixth century B.C., although fast becoming a separate hereditary class, were not absolutely closed by the rule of heredity, nor was the practice of priestly functions absolutely restricted to members of the Brahmin class (Keith, *ERE*, X, 313a).

⁴ The sagas which reflect the progressive stages of the conflict of priestly prerogatives are well discussed by Cook, *JQR*, XVIII, 749 ff.

powers of strangers are greater than those of familiar persons. It was for this reason doubtless that Micah welcomed the coming of a Levite to be priest in place of his son (Judg. 17),¹ and that Yahwism got a hold in the north at all.

The greatest religious opponents that the Levites met in their propaganda in the north were the Baal priests, but *baal* here is not, as is so generally understood, the Canaanitish god of agriculture, but very probably the bull god.² Unquestionably בַּעַל in many instances does refer to some Canaanitish or other non-Israelitish deity, but there is every reason to believe that in many cases the reference is to the Israelitish bull god. As the south had its dominant tribe and accordingly its dominant cult and priesthood, so likewise had the north. In the north, however, the domination came more slowly and was not so complete because the tribes were more scattered, and geographical and other conditions made unity difficult to realize.

Waterman would make bull worship a Canaanitish cult which the Israelites took over on their entry into Canaan,³ but of this there is no indication anywhere in the Old Testament. Like so many other scholars he would seem to err in assuming that the Israelites entered Canaan as worshipers of Yahweh and after their entry grafted on to their religion certain alien elements, and so came to identify Yahweh with the bull, as well as with other baalim. But of this we have not a particle of evidence. The facts are rather that a particular tribe of Israel entered Canaan as bull worshipers.⁴ As this tribe came more or less to dominate its neighbors and thus constitute a confederacy, the bull naturally came to be the confederate god, but grafted on to this were doubtless certain elements from the other less victorious cults. Then as the confederacy was won to Yahwism, Yahweh came to be the chief god, but it was little other than the god that was new. The old forms remained, the old theology, and much of the old paraphernalia. This is the process that has gone on in all religions throughout the world, and there

¹ On the other hand, he may already have been a Yahweh worshiper, as his name would suggest; or this may have been the name that he took after his conversion.

² It is doubtless needless to remark that בַּעַל, like אֵל, is a general term or title of deity and is not a proper name; see, e.g., Paton, *ERE*, II, 283 ff.

³ *AJSL*, XXXI, 231 ff.

⁴ Bull worship does not necessarily presuppose agriculture, as Waterman maintains, for the wild bull, at least, is an animal known to nomads.

is every reason to believe that the Israelitish religion was no exception to the general rule. Hence it would seem that we must look to some one of the Israelitish tribes for the origin of the bull cult.

The outstanding tribe of the north was of course Joseph or Ephraim. The name Ephraim itself may suggest some connection with the bull cult in that there is the bare possibility that it is connected with אֶפְרַיִם "bull," or פָּרָה "cow." But weightier far than this is the frequent reference to bull worship in the north and the manifest connection between this and the tribe of Ephraim. It is noteworthy that every reference to bull worship in the Old Testament locates it in Israel and never once connects it with the south. The place that is particularly prominent in the cult is the sanctuary at Bethel, and Kennett is unquestionably right in finding in Exod. 32 an old Israelitish saga relative to its origin and in connecting the saga with Bethel rather than with Kadesh as it is now.¹ Indeed Nöldeke, Luther, and Meyer would go so far as to make Jacob the deity originally worshiped in the bull.² Exod. 32 is universally recognized as composite in character, but critics have never agreed on the details of its analysis. It is clear, however, that the story in its original form was complimentary to Aaron.³ As Moses was the eponym of the Levites,⁴ so Aaron was the eponym of the Ephraimite priesthood and the traditional founder of the bull cult of the north. Aaron never once appears in the J document,⁵ and in E he plays a very minor rôle, acting merely as a sort of adjunct to Moses (cf., e.g., Exod. 5:1, 4) and is clearly a supernumerary who has later been introduced into the narrative to give an Israelitish flavor to early Hebrew history.⁶ Only in the episode of the golden calf does he act on his own account. "The golden calf is his: he demands the material of which it is made: he fashions it: and he presents it to the people, and dedicates it. Certainly if any of the recorded acts of

¹ "The Origin of the Aaronite Priesthood," *JTS*, VI, 161 ff.

² Cf. Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 130, 282 ff.

³ See Smend, *Die Erzählung des Hexateuchs auf ihre Quellen untersucht*, pp. lxix, 204.

⁴ Whether he was actually a Levite or not does not concern the present paper. For discussion see Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 72 ff., 118 ff.

⁵ So practically all scholars since Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, pp. 139 f.

⁶ Cf. Kennett, *JTS*, VI, 162 ff.

Aaron be historical, the episode of the golden calf can best claim to be so considered."¹ Hence he would seem to have been an integral and original part of this saga as it was at first current in Israel. Between that time and the rendering of the episode, as we have it now in Exod. 32, the story went through many versions. As Yahwism came to dominate the north, the golden calf was interpreted as simply another form of Yahweh. Then in a later period, when the prophetic propaganda brought idolatrous practices into disrepute, the story was brought into conjunction with the act of Jeroboam I (I Kings 12:28-33) in re-establishing the bull cult after its partial eclipse during the Judean domination of the north in the two previous reigns and was retold in very much the form in which we have it now in verses 1-6, 15-24, 30-35. In view of the prominence that the Aaronites had attained in the priesthood the blame for the making of the image is quite naturally shouldered on the people (vss. 21 ff., 30 ff.) and they bear the penalty (vs. 35).² When the story came into Judean hands and received from them a Judean rendering, there was joined to it the old southern story of the consecration of the Levites (vss. 25-29), much to the credit of the Levites and the discredit of the Aaronites. Here is again reflected something of the old-time jealousy between north and south, probably accentuated now by the more recent friction between the Zadokites of Jerusalem and the Aaronites of the northern sanctuaries that followed in the wake of Josiah's reformation (II Kings 23:9).³

¹ Kennett, *ibid.*, 165.

² Cf. Deut. 9:12, 16, 21.

³ That the Aaronites should later have attained the ascendancy in the priesthood is one of those anomalies that is not without parallel in history. Whether we accept all of Kennett's conclusions or not, his main thesis as to how this came about would seem to be well maintained in the article already cited, "The Origin of the Aaronite Priesthood," *JTS*, VI, 161 ff.; VII, 620 ff. (*per contra*, see McNelle, *ibid.*, 1 ff.). Briefly stated, his contention, as I understand it, is that after the deportation of the Zadokites from Jerusalem in 597 and 586 the Aaronites from the north naturally gravitated to Jerusalem. They were the only priests left in the country in any numbers, and despite the ruins of the city Jerusalem still remained the chief sanctuary of the land. The people there needed priestly direction and the Deuteronomic legislation stipulated that the Aaronites had as much right in Jerusalem as any others (Deut. 18:6-8). Then under them the ritual came to be re-established and in course of time the temple was rebuilt. Here was a case where possession was nine points of the law and the Aaronites naturally pre-empted the chief offices in the priesthood to the exclusion of the earlier Jerusalem priests (the Zadokites) who were now slowly returning from exile. That the return was in vastly smaller numbers than is traditionally recorded is now universally accepted by modern critics, and in view of the fact that the Aaronites were in possession at Jerusalem it is not surprising that so few were ready to return. It was better far to remain in

It would seem, then, that the bull cult was native to Israel and had its beginning with the tribe of Joseph or Ephraim. Other evidences would point in the same direction. In what is probably the oldest writing that has anything to say about Joseph, viz., "The Blessing of Jacob" (Gen. 49), we read:

Through the hands of the Jacob-Bull,¹
Through the name (?) of the Shepherd of the Israel-Stone,
Through thy fathers' god, that he help thee!
And El-Shaddai, that he bless thee! (vss. 24b, 25a).

Here clearly we have a direct statement of Joseph's connection with the bull cult at Bethel, or at Shechem, if we follow Luther's suggestion that "the Israel-Stone" is that mentioned in Josh. 24:26 f. as the religious rendezvous of Israel in early times.² Similarly in a poem from a later period, "The Blessing of Moses" (Deut. 33), we have a reminiscence of the same thing:

The first-born of his Ox (שׁוֹרֵר): majesty is his!
And the horns of a wild-ox (רֵאֵם) are his horns! (vs. 17a).

Just as peoples the world over speak of themselves as the children of their god and as the Hebrews thought of themselves as the children of Yahweh, so Joseph is here spoken of as the first-born of his god.³ That the reference is to the bull god would find some confirmation in Hos. 12:11 (12): "In Gilgal they sacrifice to Oxen (שׁוֹרִים)." ⁴ The comparison, too, with the wild ox may not be without significance. רֵאֵם is identical with Assyrian *rīmu*, which is often used as an appellation of deity,⁵ and in Baalam's oracles

Babylonia and enjoy there the prestige given them by Ezekiel in his preference for the Zadokites (chap. 44:15 ff.). In some such way as this one must account for the pre-eminence of the Aaronites in the later period and in the Priestly Code. Such a hypothesis, however, precludes the Babylonian origin of P and would make it in part at least a Palestinian production, and this, it is to be noted, is the tendency of recent scholarship. That the cause of the Zadokites who returned from exile was not altogether without champions may be the implication of the later Sadducean party. The Sadducees, as the name may suggest, might have begun as champions of the Zadokites, and the Pharisees, who were less conservatively minded, of the Aaronites. The Chronicler, too, may have been a champion of the more legitimate priesthood, for he shows a certain animus against the Aaronites (cf. II Chron. 29:34; 30:3).

¹ אֱבִיר here is clearly with Meyer, Luther, *et al.*, to be read אֱבִיר (see Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 531).

² See Meyer, *Israeliten*, p. 284, n. 1.

³ See further Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 284 f.

⁴ So Vulgate; cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, p. 390.

⁵ Cf. Jastrow, *Religious Belief in Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 74 ff.

the god of Israel is associated with the wild ox (Num. 23:22—24:8). It surely cannot be without significance that this association is so frequent in the Old Testament narratives and that the term אֱלֹהֵי as an appellation of deity is only used of the god of Jacob (Gen. 49:24; Isa. 49:26; 60:16; Ps. 132:2, 5), or of Israel (Isa. 1:24). Hence Zimmern¹ and Gressmann² may not be far wrong in finding a reference to the bull in the very corrupt and difficult verse, Gen. 49:22, which constitutes the opening lines of Jacob's blessing on Joseph. They alone have been able to make any real sense out of the lines and that at least must stand in their favor.

In view of all these evidences, then, it would not seem too extravagant to say that the tribal god of Joseph (or whatever we care to name the dominant tribe of Israel) was the bull god. In that case it was in the name of this god that Hoshea made the covenant at Shechem and established the beginning of the northern confederacy.³ As this confederacy extended its sway in the north, bull worship became quite the dominant cult among the Israelitish tribes and was found at most of their important sanctuaries.⁴ But it was not to hold the field uncontested for long, for presently from the south there came missionaries of Yahwism. Haupt contends that Yahweh was not known in Israel at all until after the time of Deborah,⁵ but this can be maintained only by such a drastic treatment of the Old Testament text as to be untenable. The practical absence of Yahweh names in the north down to the time of David, as we have already noted, would indicate, however, that the Yahweh cult was not very largely known until the Judean conquest. The only clearly attested Yahweh names before the time of Samuel are Joash, Gideon's father (Judg. 6:29), and Micah (Judg. 17).⁶ Micah was probably a convert to Yahwism. This would seem to account best for his manifest joy in being able to engage a Levite for priest, or, as we have

¹ ZA, VII, 164 ff.

² *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*, I, 2, pp. 173, 180.

³ For the hypothesis of the early covenant at Shechem see the present writer's article, "A Proposed Reconstruction of Early Hebrew History," *AJTh*, XXIV, 209 ff.; and Meyer, *Israeliten*, pp. 542 ff.

⁴ See Waterman's exhaustive article, "Bull-Worship in Israel," *AJSL*, XXXI, 229 ff.; and the various dictionary articles on the subject.

⁵ ZATW, XXIX, 286.

⁶ Joshua is but a later form of the earlier name Hoshea (see Num. 13:16; cf. Num. 13:8; Deut. 32:44; and LXX in I Sam. 6:14).

already noted, he may have changed his name after he became a Yahweh worshiper. That Gideon's father should have borne a Yahweh name is more surprising. Gideon himself, if we can trust the traditions, was a champion of Yahwism. Whether or not we accept Waterman's emendation of the difficult verse, Judg. 6:25, he has made it very clear that the story (vss. 25-32), of which this verse is a part, has to do with Gideon's destruction of a sanctuary of the bull cult at Orphah.¹ That the cult was a popular one is shown by the stealthy means to which Gideon had to resort to carry out his project and the intense indignation of his fellow-townsmen on the discovery of his sacrilegious act. In the crisis that followed Joash felt impelled to rally to his son's support and hence to the support of his god as against the baal, who had shown his worthlessness in allowing his sanctuary to be destroyed. As an outcome of the episode Gideon's name was changed (vs. 32), and there is much to suggest that Joash's own name came from the same incident. When we come nearer to the time of David, Yahweh names increase somewhat in number. In the two books of Samuel there are about a dozen.² Of these only three, or at most four, are names of northerners, viz., Joel(?) and Abijah, sons of Samuel (I Sam. 8:2); Jonathan, Saul's son (I Sam. 13:2); and Mica, his great-grandson (I Sam. 9:12). Samuel, we know, was a champion of Yahwism, and Saul was one of his converts, although a rather fickle one.

Those who were most responsible for the spread of Yahwism were manifestly the prophets, and before proceeding farther it may be well to say a word about the origin of these missionaries of the faith. As we have already noted, the Hebrew priests, like those of other peoples, were in the first instance shamans and owed their position to their supposed possession of mantic power. The Hebrew word for priest itself suggests this. כֹּהֵן is identical with Arabic *kâhin*, "soothsayer." The ancient Arab priests gave oracles,³ and likewise did the Hebrew priests. All the early references (e.g., Judg. 18:5 f.; I Sam. 14:18, 36 ff.; 23:9 ff.; 30:7 ff.; Deut. 33:8) indicate this as their most important function, but as time went

¹ *AJSL*, XXXI, 236 ff.

² See Gray, *Hebrew Proper Names*, pp. 281 ff.

³ See Wellhausen, *Reste*², pp. 131 ff.

on and the cultus became more elaborate, and a shrine, idol, and other paraphernalia came to be provided, new duties arose: caring for the shrine and its equipment, and officiating in the cultus. At the same time the priestly office tended to become professional, and in becoming professional it tended to become hereditary. Now duties like caring for the shrine and officiating in the cultus are the sort of thing that can become vested interests: they can be handed down from one generation to another until they become the monopoly of a particular group. But soothsaying, the ability to have the ecstatic experiences that make a man a shaman, is dependent altogether upon predisposition and temperament and is not heritable. Accordingly, as the priests became a professional and hereditary class, their earliest and most important function was lost to the profession, except as it could be preserved along merely mechanical lines, as for instance the casting of lots, the consultation of the teraphim and ephod,¹ and the observation of certain phenomena; and even these methods ceased in time. But though shamanism died out in the priesthood, the man of vision could not disappear. As the priests functioned less and less along this line and less and less satisfactorily, the need for this approach to deity was met more and more outside the profession, but rather naturally in a circle closely allied to it. Thus we have the first of the Hebrew prophets. In time they grew to such numbers and prominence that they got into the records and we read of their exploits in the stories of the later judges.

The early Yahweh prophets were of the shamanistic type. They were men possessed of the spirit of Yahweh (I Sam. 10:6; 11:6; 19:20, 23) and under the influence of that spirit expressed themselves in wild, uncontrolled religious ecstasy (I Sam. 10:5-12; 19:18-24; II Kings 9:11). This state of ecstasy might be artificially induced (I Sam. 10:5; II Kings 3:15), but after all one must be of a particular temperament to respond thereto. Prophecy was limited to a particular type of mind, but within that circle found ready response. Prophecy was contagious (I Sam. 10:10; 19:20, 23 f.). One prophet drew to himself others of like temperament, and presently prophetic societies, "the sons of the prophets," came into being.

¹ Or ark, if we follow Arnold's contention, *Ephod and Ark*, pp. 17 ff.

The early prophets are intimately associated with the priesthood and are found at the priestly sanctuaries (I Sam. 10:5; II Kings 2:3, 5; 4:38).¹ Many doubtless grew up within priestly circles. Samuel, for instance, was brought by his parents to Shiloh to be trained for the priesthood (I Sam. 1:24 ff.), but instead of becoming a priest he became a prophet.² It was their type of mind that was most akin to his own, and amongst them he became a most influential leader (I Sam. 19:20). Prophecy whether within or without priestly circles represents the more primitive, more spontaneous, more ecstatic, and less professionalized expression of the religious consciousness. It represents the break in the religious ranks that must inevitably come in any organized institution.

Hebrew prophecy arose at a time when the land was being ground under the heel of a foreign conqueror, the Philistines, and this fact had much to do with stimulating its development and molding its character. The movement became political as well as religious, and its propaganda was as much the one as the other. As zealous champions of Yahwism the prophets opposed anything and everything that was alien to the cult. Intensely emotional, easily excitable, and given to fanaticism as they were, the tragedy of the day found ready response in their hearts and they went up and down the land preaching a politico-religious crusade against the heathen. They were the means ultimately of rousing the people to the white heat of revolt, and in this they advanced tremendously the cause of Yahweh.

By the time of Samuel, Yahwism had evidently attained a firm hold in the north as a result of Levitical and prophetic propaganda. Many of the sanctuaries had become centers of the new cult. Shiloh, for instance, at one time evidently a seat of bull worship,³ was early converted to Yahwism (cf. Judg. 18:31; Jer. 7:12), probably by Eli, a Levite (I Sam. 2:27 f.), who was able to establish his

¹ So also with other peoples; cf., e.g., Jastrow, *Religious Belief in Babylonia and Assyria*, under *bārā*; Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion Today*, pp. 144 f.; J. M. Powis Smith, *The Prophet and His Problems*, chap. i, "Prophets in the Semitic World."

² Although Samuel is represented as performing priestly duties, as many another of his day, he is nowhere called a priest.

³ Cf. Stade, *ZATW*, III, 10. The Shiloh pilgrimage (Judg. 21:19 ff.; I Sam. 1:3, 21; 2:19), like the Shechem festival (Judg. 9:27), suggests an institution originally connected with the bull cult (cf. Exod. 32:19).

family there as "priests unto Yahweh" (I Sam. 1:3). The phrase, "unto Yahweh," was doubtless added to distinguish the new priesthood from the old, and to indicate that the bull priests had been replaced by Yahweh priests.¹ If we can trust the traditions, the sacred Yahweh ark, or arks, played an important rôle in the propaganda of the cult in the north, and one of these was for long settled at Shiloh. To Shiloh Samuel came as a young boy to train for the priesthood of the new faith, but later threw in his lot with its more vigorous advocates, the prophets, and in time grew out of sympathy with the priests. An indication of this is to be seen in the fact that after the destruction of Shiloh the priests moved to Nob (I Sam. 22:11, cf. 14:3), whereas Samuel returned to his home at Ramah (I Sam. 7:17) and is henceforth found in the company of the prophets. In this we have the beginning of a cleavage between him and his party, the prophets, and the Levitical priests, but both continued in their separate ways to extend the sway of the Yahweh cult.

According to our earliest and most reliable source (I Sam. 9:1-10:16) Samuel was the prime mover in the establishment of Saul as king. He was influenced to this doubtless by religious as well as political reasons. If the Hebrews were ever to throw off the yoke of the Philistines, it could only be as they were organized politically, and to do this in the name of Yahweh would give an added impetus to the spread of the Yahweh cult. Saul had come early under Samuel's notice and through his influence had apparently become a convert to the new cult (I Sam. 10:1-13), much to the surprise of his friends (I Sam. 10:12; 19:24, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"). It was under the guiding hand of prophecy, therefore, that the first kingdom, such as it was, came into existence; but it was a disappointment to all concerned. The revolt against the Philistines was not the success anticipated: Saul like any new convert was rather fickle in his allegiance to Yahwism and the prophetic party; and like anyone suddenly raised to power he took his prerogatives too seriously and too jealously.² Like any other king of his

¹ So in I Sam. 14:3 Eli himself is called "the priest of Yahweh in Shiloh"; cf. I Sam. 5:5, where the Philistine priests are called "the priests of Dagon."

² A part of the prerogative of any ancient monarch was participation in religious functions. For Hebrew kings cf., e.g., I Sam. 13:9; II Sam. 6:14, 17 f.; 8:18; I Kings 8:5, 62 ff.; 9:25; 12:33).

time he looked upon religious functionaries as subordinate officials whom he could appoint, control, and depose at will. The result was that he had not been king very long before he quarrelled and broke with Samuel and the prophets (I Sam. 13:8-15, cf. 15; 19:18 ff.), with the necromancers (I Sam. 28:3, 9),¹ and with the priests of Nob (I Sam. 22:11 ff.). His break with the prophets and massacre of the priests of Nob were serious blows to Yahwism in the north and succor now could only come from the south.

Samuel, as an Ephraimite,² had naturally hoped to see a union of the Hebrew people under a northern king, but his hopes and his efforts in that direction ended in dismal failure. The petty kingdom of Ishbaal that survived the death of Saul succumbed very quickly to the growing power of David to the south. Whatever may be the facts lying behind the stories of David's early relations with Saul,³ there can be no question that David was the founder of the southern kingdom and that this was a keen rival of the northern kingdom of Saul, and the two were often in conflict until the south finally absorbed its northern rival. In this conflict the south had the open support of the prophets and Levites in the north, and this of course widened the breach between them and Saul (I Sam. 19:18 ff.; 22:11 ff.). Disappointed in Saul, they very naturally turned to David and were the more ready to support him in that he was from the south, the home of Yahwism, and like them was a zealous champion of the cause of Yahweh. With David's success over the north and later against the Philistines Yahwism reached the height of its power. A royal sanctuary was established at Jerusalem and the Shilonite ark deposited there. Yahwism was made the religion of the land and to secure it in that place the priests were organized under Abiathar as chief priest, and he and Zadok, together with the other leading priests, were made members of the royal court in Jerusalem.⁴ Similar prestige was given to prophecy in that the leading prophets,

¹ This has generally been regarded as unhistorical (cf., e.g., Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, p. 178), but there could have been no possible motive for a redactor to attribute such an act to one whom he esteemed so lightly as Saul.

² The Chronicler (I Chron. 6:13, 18), as we might expect, makes Samuel a Levite. So also do Girdlestone, *Expositor*, 1899, pp. 385 ff., and Van Hoonacker, *Le sacerdoce Lévitique*, pp. 265 f., but without good reason, we believe.

³ For discussion see Cook, "Saul and David," *JQR*, XIX, 363 ff.

⁴ See Baudissin, *DB*, IV, 72b.

Gad and Nathan, were also admitted to the royal court (cf. II Sam. 24:11 ff.; I Kings 1). The work of David in this direction was continued by his son and successor Solomon, until it seemed as if nothing of the older bull worship would survive. But old customs and institutions die hard, and remnants of bull worship were absorbed into Yahwism.¹

On the death of Solomon and the secession of the north under the leadership of Jeroboam I² all the long and tedious work of Levites, prophets, and kings in the attempted conversion of the north to Yahwism seemed undone by a single stroke. Jeroboam broke with the south religiously as well as politically,³ and re-established bull worship as the official cult of the north (I Kings 12:26 ff.). He deposed the Levites from the priesthood, restored the old sanctuaries, and appointed as priests those "who were not of the sons of Levi" (I Kings 12:31 ff.). Thus was bull worship revived in the north and its priests, the Aaronites, returned to power.

The days that followed made ever more apparent the defection of the north from Yahwism, but after all it was this new religious crisis that brought forth a new champion of the cause of Yahweh in the person of a new type of prophet. The earlier prophets, as we have already noted, in time came to organize themselves into societies and in this we have the beginning of the professionalization of prophecy. Before long it went the way of the priesthood and for that matter of all institutions. It lost its original spontaneous, inspired character and became in time as professional as the priesthood against which it was originally a protest.⁴ As earlier prophecy was a protest against the professionalization of the sacred office of interpreter of Yahweh, so the new type of prophecy came into being as a movement of the same order, and found itself more bitterly arrayed against the professional order of prophecy than the earlier prophets had ever been arrayed against the priests. The issues now

¹ The evidences of this are to be seen in the bull names borne by Hebrews, by the presence of bronze bulls and cherubim in Solomon's temple, and the two colossal cherubim of olive wood within the oracle; see Waterman, *AJSL*, XXXI, 235 ff.

² That the north had never taken kindly to southern domination is apparent from the records; cf., e.g., II Sam. 19:40 ff.; 20; I Kings 11:26 ff.

³ This was of course the rule in early days. Political revolt meant religious cleavage. The day had not yet arrived when two independent nations could worship the same god.

⁴ These professional prophets came to be known as false prophets in contradistinction from the true prophets.

were clearer and men had advanced in ethical and religious discernment. The first prophets of the new type were Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah; but these after all were somewhat allied to the old order. The new type of prophecy receives its first full expression in the mighty work of Amos, who very clearly defines his status as not of the old order but of the new (Amos 7:14 f.).

With the revival of bull worship in the north by Jeroboam I, Yahwism was dealt a serious but not a fatal blow. Not all the people returned to the old religion, but many naturally clung to the new faith, to such a degree indeed that even in the dark days of Ahab's reign it could be said that seven thousand (i.e., many) were "the knees that had not bowed to the baal" (I Kings 19:18). The old religion could not stand, but finally succumbed before the vigorous campaign of the prophets which culminated in the revolution of Jehu.¹ Yahwism was again established as the official cult of the north,² and the north was now independent of the south. For the first time in history we have two distinct nations worshipping the same god, and in this a long step had been taken in the direction of making Yahweh an international god and so a universal god.³

The prophets began as champions of Yahwism. That led them to oppose baalism, and eventually all the idolatrous and licentious practices connected therewith. That led them in time to be champions of truth and of Yahweh as the god of truth. The establishment of Yahweh as the god of two distinct nations like Judah and Israel and the recognition that he was using an alien race, the Assyrians, as an instrument of punishment in his hand, eventually led the prophets to see in Yahweh the god of the world, the god universal. Thus with the prophets monolatry broadens into monotheism, nationalism into universalism, and religion becomes a matter of the heart and of righteous living rather than mere ritualistic practice. With them

¹ With the Hebrews, as with ancient peoples generally, conversion was still by the sword. It is not until much later that a new interpretation of religion comes into the world with the later prophets (cf. Hosea's attitude toward Jehu's revolution, chap. 1:4).

² That much of the old religion remained in popular practice is apparent from Hos. 8:5 f.; 10:5; 12:12; 13:2; and similar passages.

³ Cf. J. M. Powis Smith, "The Effect of the Disruption on the Hebrew Thought of God," *AJSL*, XXXII, 261 ff.

we come to a new interpretation of god, a new interpretation of man, and a new interpretation of religion. With them origins cease and the fruitage of ages of intensest religious experience is given to the world in those mighty sermons that still remain the admiration and wonder of the world.